LEGISLATURE LIBRARY
DEC 27 1990
EDMONTON

SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WILDERNESS AREAS AND ECOLOGICAL RESERVES

April 1, 1989 to March 31, 1990

91-02431/

For information on Alberta's Ecological Reserves Program, contact:

Alberta Recreation and Parks
Provincial Parks Service
Standard Life Centre
7th floor, 10405 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3N4

Telephone: (403) 427-6791

Alberta
RECREATION AND PARKS

Room 425 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2B6 403/427-3672

Office of
the Minister

October 30, 1990

The Honourable Dr. David Carter
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Sir:

I have the honour of transmitting the Seventh Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Wilderness Areas and Ecological Reserves.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Stephen C. West
Minister
Alberta Recreation and Parks

Alberta
RECREATION AND PARKS
Provincial Parks Service

Standard Life Centre, 10405 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5J 3N4

October 30, 1990

The Honourable Dr. Stephen C. West
Minister of Recreation and Parks
425 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Sir:

I have the honour to present the Seventh Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Wilderness Areas and Ecological Reserves.

Respectfully submitted,

Donn E. Cline
Chairman
Advisory Committee on
Wilderness Areas and
Ecological Reserves

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 3.....Statement of the Chairman

Page 4.....Role of the Advisory Committee

Page 5.....Advisory Committee Membership

Page 6.....The Ecological Reserves Program - A Synopsis

Page 10.....Management Planning - Status Report

Page 12.....Summary of Advisory Committee Meetings and Activities

Page 13.....Advisory Committee Recommendations

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN

The year now behind us has been one of change. With a new minister with whom to discuss recommendations, the year was highlighted by review and definition of goals. The culmination of this work was a meeting between the committee and the Honourable Dr. Stephen C. West.

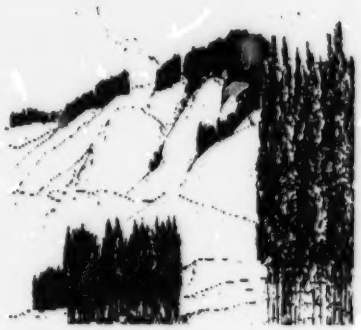
At this meeting, we were able to discuss the program and to set out objectives for the program over the next few years. The committee continues its review of potential ecological reserves, with a focus on several of the key areas which have been suggested to us by the general public or identified by staff associated with the Ecological Reserves Program.

We have been very successful in bringing recommendations to past ministers on many of the representative areas identified in a major study of the province at the time the act was being drafted. One of these areas is being recommended by the Advisory Committee in this annual report. We look forward to bringing further recommendations on candidate ecological reserves in the near future.

As well, we will be exploring ways to raise the profile and value of Alberta's ecological reserves by promoting their use as outdoor classrooms for Alberta students, as part of their outdoor education programs.

We will be encouraging the development of a network of volunteer naturalists to escort school groups on study trips to ecological reserves. These volunteers will also be responsible for securing access permission, for monitoring the reserves for inappropriate activities, and for reporting these activities to the reserve managers.

We will also be approaching the academic and scientific community to develop research programs and studies in ecological reserves.



We have asked the Department of Recreation and Parks to prepare regulations for management of reserves. As part of the preparation of regulations, they will also identify areas where the act could be improved.

Agencies working with the committee are being asked to give a high priority to the development and completion of management plans for each ecological reserve. A status report on each of those management plans is included in this annual report. Also, Alberta Recreation and Parks is presently preparing management plans for Alberta's three wilderness areas.

Donn Cline
Chairman

ROLE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee on Wilderness Areas and Ecological Reserves has been appointed to represent the interests of the general public as they pertain to wilderness areas and ecological reserves and to advise the Minister of Recreation and Parks on matters relevant to those interests. The committee's role is advisory and does not include the authority to make decisions. The ultimate responsibility for decision-making on all matters relevant to wilderness areas and ecological reserves rests with the Minister of Recreation and Parks.

The guiding principle in the work of the Advisory Committee is reconciling the system of wilderness areas and ecological reserves in Alberta with the many interests of the public as a whole.

The Advisory Committee was established pursuant to Section 2 of the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act, 1981. The role of the committee as set out in Section 2(7) of the act is as follows:

2(7) The Advisory Committee shall receive and consider requests from the public regarding wilderness areas and ecological reserves and may make recommendations to the minister regarding:

(a) the establishment of new wilderness areas or ecological reserves;

(b) the addition of lands to wilderness areas or ecological reserves;

(c) withdrawal of lands from wilderness areas or ecological reserves and

(d) the making of regulations for the administration, management, operation and utilization of wilderness areas, ecological reserves and controlled buffer zones.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Advisory Committee is set out in the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act as follows:

2(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall establish a committee called the "Advisory Committee on Wilderness Areas and Ecological Reserves" consisting of 12 members and shall designate one of the members as chairman.

(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may prescribe the term of office of any member of the committee or the term of office of the chairman.

(3) The minister shall designate a member of the Advisory Committee as secretary to the committee.

(4) The Advisory Committee shall consist of:

(a) two employees of the Department of Recreation and Parks,
(b) three employees of Alberta Energy and Natural Resources (presently Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, and Department of Energy),
(c) one employee of Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, and
(d) six persons who are not employed by the government or a government agency.

Members of the Advisory Committee as appointed by Order-In-Council are:

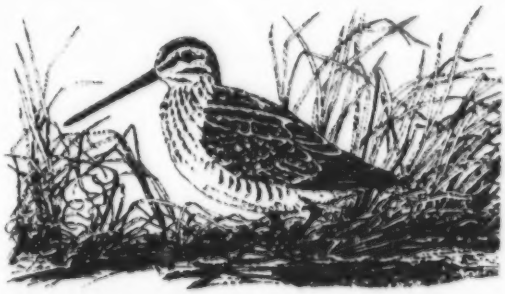
Christian Andersen.....Grande Prairie
William Byrne.....Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism
Jack Clements.....Edmonton
Donn Cline.....Chairman, Alberta Recreation and Parks
Michael Day..... Alberta Energy
Bruce Duffin.....Secretary, Alberta Recreation and Parks
Horst Fauser.....Lethbridge
Thomas Gilchrist.....Milk River
Ken Higginbotham.....Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife
Ken Kultgen.....Foremost
Peter Orlecki .....Two Hills
Murray Turnbull.....Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife

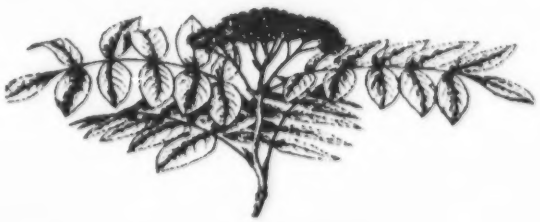
THE ECOLOGICAL RESERVES PROGRAM - A SYNOPSIS

Ecological reserves are areas established as examples of naturally functioning ecosystems representative of the six Natural Regions of Alberta (see map 1). Biological, geographical or geological features that are rare, unusual or otherwise special are also protected.

The Alberta government recognizes that the preservation of natural environments and the plants and animals they sustain is fundamental to advances in industries such as agriculture, forestry and medicine. As such, these protected areas serve as outdoor classrooms and laboratories for environmental education and scientific research. They also allow us an opportunity to study how natural processes shape the environment. Perhaps most importantly, they are tangible evidence of Alberta's commitment to share the land with its other inhabitants.

The increase in public support for ecological reserves reflects a greater understanding of the long-term benefits of protecting representative examples of the province's varied landscapes. Public groups and organizations in addition to individual members of the public are recognized as important contributers in identifying and nominating sites for future consideration as ecological reserves. Both public and government input was an important element in identifying the original list of sites proposed for ecological reserve status. Additionally, public open houses are held prior to establishing a site as an ecological reserve for purposes of obtaining public input on what is being recommended.





The Ecological Reserves Program currently has 11 reserves designated by Order-In-Council (see map 1 for general locations). These are:

1. Crow Lake

- established June 25, 1987.
- contains 3.62 square miles (2319 ac.; 938 ha.).
- contains ecosystems representative of the Mixedwood Subregion of the Boreal Forest Natural Region including: upland spruce, pine and aspen forests; patterned fens, marshes and bogs.
- contains special features including: bald eagles, woodland caribou and rare plants.
- little evidence of human disturbance.

2. Goose Mountain

- established June 25, 1987.
- contains 4.81 square miles (3080 ac.; 1246 ha.).
- contains ecosystems and features representative of the Northern Outliers Subregion of the Foothills Natural Region including: colluvial slopes, bedrock ridges, fir-spruce-pine forests, and tall shrub thickets.
- contains special features including: subxeric herb meadows, seepage areas and disjunct species.
- high uplands in the reserve were not glaciated during the last Ice Age.

3. Silver Valley

- established June 25, 1987.
- contains 6.97 square miles (4460 ac.; 1805 ha.).
- contains ecosystems representative of the Peace River Subregion of the Parkland Natural Region including: aspen forests, wild rye/shrub parkland and steep slope speargrass grasslands.
- contains special features including: rare and uncommon plants (*e.g., Stellaria crispa, Artemisia longifolia, Aster sibiricus*), slumps and drainage coulees.
- plant communities at Silver Valley are strongly influenced by the valley slopes of the Peace River and the numerous tributary creeks flowing through the area.
- a wildfire of 1936 burned most of the area.

4. Kootenay Plains

- established June 25, 1987.
- contains 12.37 square miles (7917 ac.; 3204 ha.).
- contains ecosystems representative of the Montane Subregion of the Rocky Mountain Natural Region including: *Agropyron-Artemisia* grasslands, white spruce-lodgepole pine forests, and limber pine forests.
- contains special features including: calcareous fens, calcareous cliff habitats, rare plants (e.g., *Orobanche fasciculata*).
- the grasslands are maintained because of the geomorphology, low precipitation and winds of the area.

5. Kennedy Coulee

- established October 22, 1987.
- contains 4.13 square miles (2640 ac.; 1068 ha.)
- contains ecosystems representative of the Mixed Grassland Subregion of the Grassland Natural Region including: blue grama-wheatgrass-speargrass grasslands, ponds, alkaline wetlands and coulees with aspen woodlands.
- contains special features including: springs, rare plants (e.g., cushion everlasting), nesting ferruginous hawks, populations of species peripheral to Alberta (e.g., olive-backed pocket mouse, short-horned lizard, shrubby evening primrose).
- borders the Canada/U.S. boundary.

6. Athabasca Dunes

- established June 25, 1987.
- contains 14.55 square miles (9315 ac.; 3769 ha.).
- contains ecosystems representative of the Athabasca Plain Subregion of the Canadian Shield Natural Region including: active and stabilized sand dunes, jackpine-aspen woodlands and jackpine-black spruce dry bogs.
- contains special features including: kame deposits, active sand-grass communities, and one large active transverse dune.
- the dunes were created through glacial and wind action on sandstone and granite.

7. Hand Hills

- established January 14, 1988.
- contains 8.61 square miles (5507 ac.; 2229 ha.).
- contains ecosystems representative of the Northern Fescue Subregion of the Grassland Natural Region including: fescue grassland communities, alkaline seepage areas, seasonal sloughs, moist meadows and aspen woodland.
- contains special features including: nesting habitat for the endangered piping plover, populations of upland sandpipers and thirteen-lined ground squirrels, and rare plants (e.g. crowfoot violet, yellow evening primrose).
- several steep-sided drainage valleys cut through the area.
- a system of high rolling hills are present in the southern portion.

8. Wainwright Dunes

- established January 14, 1988.
- contains 10.89 square miles (6970 ac.; 2821 ha.).
- contains ecosystems representative of the Central Subregion of the Parkland Natural Region including: aspen groves, speargrass-rough fescue grasslands and stabilized sand dunes.
- contains special features including: a sloping fen, springs, dune "blowouts", species at the southern end of their range (e.g., red squirrels, ovenbirds, American redstarts) and uncommon plants (e.g., showy everlasting and oblong-leaved sundew).
- the reserve contains dunes up to 30 meters high.
- the area includes a unique mixture of southern grasslands, boreal forest and parkland vegetation types.

9. Marshybank

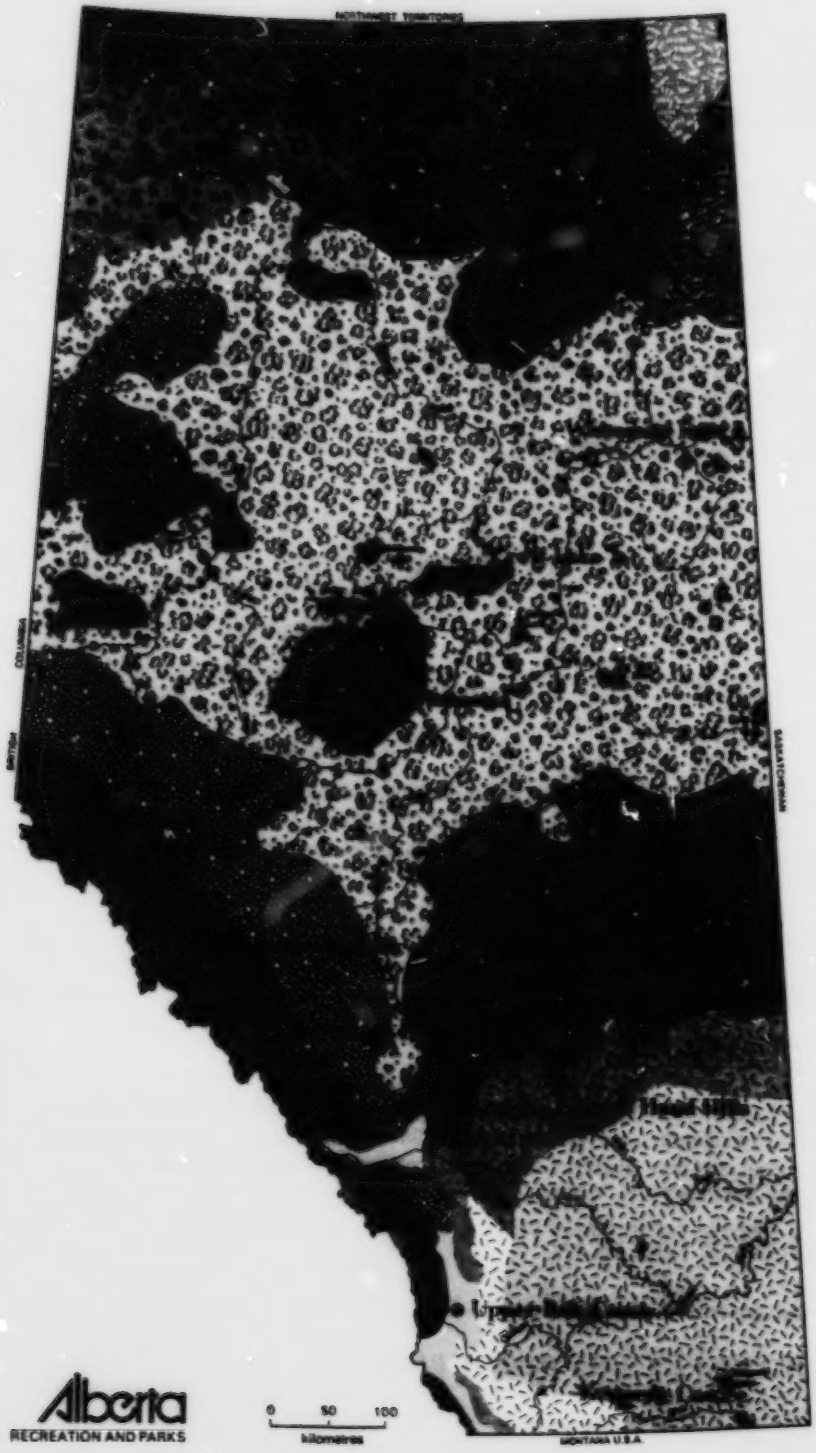
- established June 25, 1987.
- contains 3.2 square miles (2050 ac.; 829 ha.).
- contains ecosystems representative of the Main Foothills Subregion of the Foothills Natural Region including: pine-feathermoss forests, pine-spruce forests, peatlands, sedge fens and meadows.
- contains special features including: marl pools, slumps, and rare plants (e.g., Greenland primrose).
- the reserve contains two distinct biophysical areas. The first is a terrace-like lowland of lodgepole pine, black spruce fens and willow/birch wetlands. The second is an area of extensive bedrock ridges with young lodgepole pine growing amidst mature stands of Engelmann spruce.

10. Whitemud Falls

- established June 25, 1987.
- contains 3.3 square miles (2137 ac.; 864 ha.).
- contains ecosystems representative of the Mixedwood Subregion of the Boreal Forest Natural Region including: spruce-aspen forests, pine-lichen woodlands, grass-sedge meadows and willow shrublands.
- contains special features including: rare plants (e.g., *Eupatorium maculatum*), a thirty metre waterfall, gorges, rapids, caves, cliffs, 25 metre dolomite stacks, and a small dune field.

11. Upper Bob Creek

- established February 16, 1989
- contains 10.04 square miles (6427 ac.; 2600 ha.).
- contains ecosystems representative of the Montane Subregion of the Rocky Mountain Natural Region including: Douglas fir forests, Douglas fir-limber pine forests, aspen forests, fescue-oatgrass grasslands and willow shrublands.
- contains special features including: north-south ridges, rare plants (e.g., *Oryzopsis exigua*), populations of hoary marmots, golden-mantled ground squirrels and lazuli buntings, and an elk wintering range.



Natural Regions of Alberta

Grassland
- Mixed
- Northern Fescue
- Foothills

Parkland
- Central
- Foothills
- Peace River

Foothills
- Main
- Northern Outliers

Boreal Forest
- Sub-Arctic
- Hay River
- Peace River Lowlands
- Mixed Wood

Rocky Mountain
- Montane
- Sub-Alpine
- Alpine

Canadian Shield
- Kazan Upland
- Athabasca Plain

● Ecological Reserves

Alberta
RECREATION AND PARKS

MANAGEMENT PLANNING - STATUS REPORT

To effectively manage the resources contained within an ecological reserve, a plan is required that outlines the acceptable focus and direction for dealing with the potential management issues of that reserve. The general process for producing a management plan and the responsibilities at each stage of the process are presented in the following; and is only intended for illustrative purposes, not as a recommendation of the Advisory Committee of an absolute planning process. Once a lead government department is identified as the one responsible for undertaking the management planning for a particular ecological reserve, it is their obligation to ensure that the plan proceeds through to completion. The chart on the following page indicates the status of the management planning process for each of the eleven established ecological reserves.

STEP 1: ***PREPARATION OF A TERMS OF REFERENCE.***

- responsibility: lead government department

STEP 2: ***APPROVAL OF A TERMS OF REFERENCE.***

- responsibility: lead government department submits document to the Ecological Reserve Coordinating Committee (E.R.C.C.) for approval.

STEP 3: ***IDENTIFICATION OF A PLANNING TEAM.***

- responsibility: lead government department

[NOTE: THE PLANNING TEAM MAY INCLUDE PUBLIC REPRESENTATION].

STEP 4: ***PREPARATION OF A DRAFT PLAN.***

- responsibility: lead government department

STEP 5: ***REVIEW OF THE DRAFT PLAN.***

- responsibility: lead government department submits document to the E. R. C. C. for review. The Advisory Committee will also be involved through the E.R.C.C. in the review of the draft plan. The lead government department also obtains any necessary public input on the draft plan prior to preparing the final plan.

STEP 6: ***PREPARATION OF THE FINAL PLAN.***

- responsibility: lead government department

STEP 7: ***APPROVAL OF THE FINAL PLAN.***

- responsibility: lead government department submits document to the E.R.C.C. for review and approval. The Advisory Committee will also be involved through the E.R.C.C. in the review and approval of the final plan, and may also choose to make recommendations on the plan to the Minister of Recreation and Parks.

STEP 8: ***IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN.***

- responsibility: lead government department

STEP 9: ***FUTURE REVIEW AND REVISION OF THE PLAN.***

- responsibility: lead government department

FIGURE 1

Steps in the planning process that **have been completed** for each of the eleven established ecological reserves. [NOTE: a box under a particular step will ***ONLY*** be shaded in if that step *has been completed by* March 31, 1990, ***NOT*** if work is still progressing on that step].

ECOLOGICAL RESERVE	STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS								
	#1	# 2	# 3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9
Athabasca Dunes[1]									
Crow Lake[1]	■	■	■						
Goose Mountain[1]	■	■	■						
Hand Hills[2,4]	■	■	■						
Kennedy Coulee[3,4]	■	■	■						
Kootenay Plains[1]									
Marshybank[1]									
Silver Valley[1]	■	■							
Upper Bob Creek[1,4]	■	■	■						
Wainwright Dunes[3]	■	■							
Whitemud Falls[1]									

[1] = The Alberta Forest Service is responsible for preparing a management plan.

[2] = The Provincial Parks Service is responsible for preparing a management plan.

[3] = The Public Lands Division is responsible for preparing a management plan.

[4] = Members of the public and/or public groups have been involved in the preparation of the management plan for this reserve.

SUMMARY OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

November 30, 1989 - Edmonton

On this date, members of the Advisory Committee were re-appointed through an Order-In-Council for a three year period.

February 22, 1990 - Edmonton

The newly appointed Advisory Committee met to deal with a number of outstanding topics that had arisen over the past several months. At this meeting, hunting as a management tool was discussed with particular reference to the situation within Upper Bob Creek Ecological Reserve. The committee also reviewed the status of the proposed seismic program on Plateau Mountain. An update on the status of management planning for established ecological reserves was presented and discussed. The 1990/91 workplan and the effectiveness of the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act were two additional topics that received some discussion. The committee was also formally introduced to the Minister of Recreation and Parks who addressed the members and elaborated upon future initiatives for the Ecological Reserves Program.

The committee also reviewed a report at this meeting titled "Outstanding Management Issues for Ross Lake Candidate Ecological Reserve". This report focussed on a number of issues that were raised by various stakeholders of the area at a workshop held in the Jefferson Community Hall in January of 1989, and proposed several recommendations for resolving those issues. The Advisory Committee supported the recommendations of that report, and recommended that it form the basis for resolution of certain management issues relating to the Candidate Ross Lake Ecological Reserve.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Plateau Mountain Candidate Ecological Reserve:

Prior to recommending this area as an ecological reserve, considerable dialogue occurred with Husky Oil Company, the principal leaseholder in the area, to deal with any major concerns related to petroleum and natural gas activities. Consequently, in the 1988/89 Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Wilderness Areas and Ecological Reserves, it was recommended that in order that the company might determine the extent of the Savannah Creek gas field, a seismic program would be allowed to occur prior to the establishment of Plateau Mountain as an ecological reserve. To accommodate that recommendation, agreements were made with the company that would allow them the time and opportunity to conduct an effective seismic program in the area. Husky Oil Company has since declined the opportunity to conduct the seismic program and the time allotted for completion of the seismic program has expired.

Plateau Mountain is located within Kananaskis Country. The management principles that are in place within Kananaskis Country will aid in protecting lands and resources adjacent to the candidate ecological reserve as well as those resources contained within the reserve itself.

Recommendations:

Based on biophysical reports, input from written and verbal submissions and the studied consideration of its members, the Advisory Committee on Wilderness Areas and Ecological Reserves is pleased to make the following recommendations:

1. that an area of 2242 hectares (8.6 square miles) be established as Plateau Mountain Ecological Reserve as illustrated on Map 2. These figures do not include the 81 hectares (200 acres) that are recommended for inclusion in the future, subject to oil and gas access requirements being determined;

2. that the Plateau Mountain Natural Area designation be rescinded following the designation of Plateau Mountain as an ecological reserve;

3. that the Alberta Forest Service be responsible for completing a management plan for the reserve, and for the management of the ecological reserve itself.

PLATEAU MOUNTAIN
Candidate Ecological Reserve

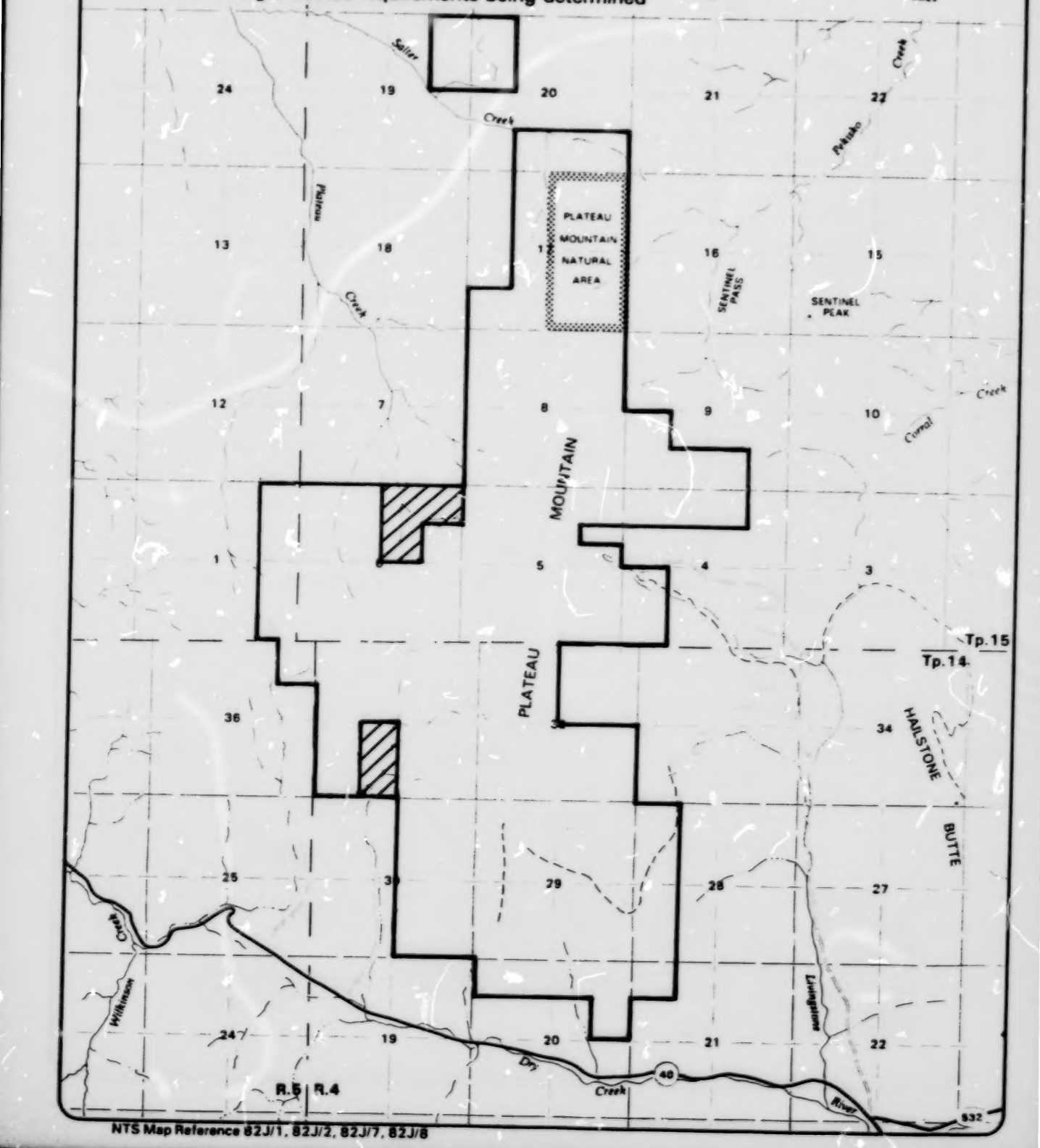
Tp. 14 and 15, R. 4 and 5 West of 5th Meridian

Map 2

Advisory Committee Recommendation

Area recommended for inclusion in the future, subject to oil and gas access requirements being determined

1 : 50 000



NTS Map Reference 82J/1, 82J/2, 82J/7, 82J/8